

## **THE TEMPLE RUINS:**

It was early spring when the weary pilgrims reached the fertile highland valley, they gazed with awe-struck wonder at the panorama spread out before them. The tall stately pines on the mountains looked down upon spring flowers, all bursting with anticipation as they crowded around the sunlit stream meandering through the valley.

The group dropped to their knees and thanked God for his bounteous provisions and decided right there and then, that they would settle in this valley and build their community.

There was so much work to be done, wells had to be dug, houses built, roads carved out, and crops planted. The people were an industrious race though, and they set to the task at hand with no thought for tomorrow, except for the glorious vision that a new community would take root in the wilderness. Tearing down the trees from the mountains around about them, clearing the land to build their houses and farms, chasing away the wild animals so as their cattle and sheep could graze in safety. The town itself was laid out close to the stream and irrigation channels were dug out, so as the townsfolk could receive a never ending supply of water. It took a considerable amount of time and effort to build their tiny community in an untamed and alien land.

They were helped along the way though, by an influx of more pilgrims who had heard of the abundant provisions the valley had to offer. The people were so proud when they finished, no matter that the surrounding hills were steadily being stripped bare of trees, at last they had something to call their own. There was still plenty of good usable timber left and the valley looked much as it always had.

It was about that time that the pastor came up with his idea, a grand one so all the people said. He desired to build a temple to the glory of God, in honour of his provisions and tender mercies shown, when he guided them to this fertile little valley-and so it came to pass.....

The menfolk went back on up into the nearby mountains and began felling the remaining trees, they chose only the best timber for this was to be a very special building. The women started cutting down the grass and laying it out to dry, a patch of earth was chosen and the pastor prayed over it and blessed it.

The people bowed their heads reverently for this was holy ground now, sanctified by God Almighty. The frame was the first thing to go up once the land had been cleared, the bricks were made from mud mixed with the straw that the women had laid out. The mud bricks even had bible verses carved into them while they were drying, a novel idea so everybody said. They worked hard on their church, huge wooden doors were set in place, fine paneling on the inside walls, the floorboards lovingly polished until they shone. The pews carved out of the best timber they could find. The cross was left rough and rugged to remind the people of Christ's sacrifice, it was a true masterpiece when finally it was completed. The pastor laid the finishing touch with a huge stone of polished granite into which he had carved the immortal words.

### **THIS CHURCH IS DEDICATED TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**

The people all sang hymns and listened to the pastor as he compared their labours to those of the children of Israel, who had built the temple of Solomon. God was indeed well pleased with all their work, and within this tabernacle they could all give thanks for his wondrous provisions. The congregation all sighed with relief and went home to prepare for the special dedication service the next morning.

It was early when the pastor set out in his wagon to prepare his sermon, and he was filled with a warm inner glow as he rode along whistling an old gospel tune. As he gazed out at the mountains, he noticed that a patch of forest still remained. He made a mental note to mention to the church board of the pressing need for a bible school. He thanked the Lord under his breath that some trees still remained, there should be just enough timber to finish the job-God had provided yet again.....

The old man got to his feet as the pastor dismounted, waiting patiently for him as he unhitched the team.

“Good morning stranger,” the pastor beamed, pleased that someone had turned up early for the service, it looked like it was going to be a blessed day for the Lord. The old man sighed wearily as he indicated the church with a wave of his arm.

“This was not here the last time I passed by.”

The pastor chuckled as he bounded confidently up the steps of his church.

“You should have seen this place a few years ago friend, a real wilderness, but with God’s help we cleared the mountains and valleys, why we even put that stream to good use.”

“What happened to all the wild animals?” The pastor shrugged nonchalantly as he replied.

“You won’t find much hunting around here old man, we drove away the deer and wolves. This is good pasture land it was a real shame to let it all go to waste,” he squinted down at him.

“You look a little weary old man can I get you some food?”

The old man shook his head and brushed away a tear as he stared at the bare and forlorn mountainsides now almost bereft of trees. Huge holes had been blasted out of them from the nearby quarries, he fixed the pastor with a sad mournful look as he answered.

“I have come a long way with some terrible news,” he said.

The pastor frowned as he turned towards the door.

“And what kind of news could that be, has war been declared or something?”

“You could say that,” the old man sighed. “It was war all right, of the most horrible kind, the temple is in ruins.”

The pastor stopped dead in his tracks and turned slowly around as the blood drained from his face, an eerie feeling in the pit of his stomach.

“The temple? Who did this blasphemous thing?”

“It seems,” the old man began sadly. “That there was a race of people who had wandered far from home, they were lonely and lost with no temple to worship in. Apparently so the story goes, the churches they’d once worshipped in no longer suited their needs they had been driven out by evil men, such a sad race were they. My Lord and Master had pity on them and took them in, he even allowed them to stay in his very own temple. He had labored long and hard with his temple, fashioning the pillars by hand and laying out the ground carefully beforehand, he stretched out a roof of the deepest blue over his temple.

He was so proud when it was all finished you should have seen his face, he wanted everyone to come into his church. He gathered his congregation, none were excluded on the basis of race, colour or creed, for all were welcome. He was not willing that any should perish, he loved them all so dearly that he provided food and drink for them out of his private larder. At night he gave them shelter so as they would always be warm, it was such a joy to see them worshipping in his temple.

As time went by however, the people whom he had invited in became jealous and proud, they did not appreciate the kindness lavished upon them by our Lord and Master and so they began tearing down his temple. No matter that he had built it with his own bare hands, laboring as a woman in childbirth to give birth to his dream. They desecrated his Holy of Holies, the Tabernacle, and hunted his congregation for food. They even stripped the skins from their backs and sold them to passing traders for profit, grinding their bones to fertilize their fields. Our Lord’s people fled to the nearby mountains where it is said they are still hunted, in the name of what these people call sport and pleasure.

But this vile race was not content with that, they plotted amongst themselves, even though our Lord and Master was prepared to forgive them. Our Master was overthrown in a coup de grâce and they usurped his position of authority. To make matters even worse, they mocked his memory by building their own temple. This accursed race wants all the world to see how great are their works when compared to our Lord’s sanctuary. Our Master’s temple lies in ruins and they have erected their own awful abomination in its place. The temple was the only thing our Lord could call his own, but they have stolen it and laid to waste all his works. Why even as I speak his heart is broken with sorrow,” the old man finished abruptly and looked up at the pastor pleadingly.

“Tell me oh man of God, what kind of people would do such a profane thing?”

The pastor was livid with rage as he bounded down the steps.

“A godless and heinous people for whom only eternal damnation awaits,” he grasped the old man by the shoulder.

“Take me to this adulterous and sinful race and I will curse them for all eternity for this blasphemy!”

“There is no need for you to go,” and the old man’s grip was surprisingly strong as he turned the

pastor to face him. His eyes seemed to glow with an otherworldly light as he stared into his soul. "You are that adulterous people," he waved his arm wide to indicate the desecrated landscape. "And this was my temple."

With the judgment pronounced-God turned around and with a soft shoe shuffle slowly walked away whistling an old gospel tune quietly to himself.

Written by Alastair Rosie 1996 ©